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THE RED CROSS

IN CHARGE OF

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WITHDRAWAL OF THE SIBERIAN COMMISSION

Covering a stretch of five thousand miles, from Vladivostok to the Ural Mountains, with its chain of eight hospitals, one hundred fifty-two nurses, forty-two nurses' aids, and with its large complement of doctors, other relief workers, and native helpers, the American Red Cross Commission to Siberia withdrew from that country last month, in accordance with the government's plan for the return of American troops and railroad engineering units.

In closing its relief operations, the Red Cross took all possible measures to preserve the usefulness of those activities in which they have been engaged since the spring of 1918. When the Bolshevik uprisings threatened to jeopardize the safety of the personnel at Omsk, the point of operation farthest to the west, this hospital was evacuated last fall, while those at Irkutsk and Verkhudinsk have recently been turned over to the Siberian authorities and to the Russian Red Cross.

During the first year of its work, the Commission established fourteen hospitals for sick and wounded Czech and Russian soldiers, and sent eighteen heavily loaded relief trains from Vladivostok to western Siberia. In its anti-typhus campaign the American Red Cross equipped and maintained an anti-typhus train which shuttled back and forth along the Trans-Siberian Railroad. In the field of military relief, the Commission provided many comforts, recreation, and entertainment for the American troops, the railroad men who have kept the Trans-Siberian Railway open, and for the native soldiers.

Of especial interest have been the operations of the Red Cross in establishing hospitals, hospital trains, dental and medical clinics, as well as in giving supplies to already established institutions. Twenty-two Red Cross nurses have been assigned to service at the Russian Island Hospital, situated on the heights across the bay from Vladivostok; thirty-two others have been on duty at Verkhne-Udinsk, near Lake Baikal, and the Chinese Border; at Irkutsk, also near the central part of Siberia, twenty-four nurses have been stationed in Red Cross hospitals; while other nurses and aids were on duty in various other isolated parts of this sparsely settled country,

then so desperately in need of medical and nursing aid to check the typhus epidemic which threatened China and Siberia.

Among the thousands of refugees driven westward by the advancing battlefront of the Bolsheviki were many women and young girls, in addition to children and the aged. In addition to building barracks for them, and supplying occupation and livelihood, by opening sewing-rooms, many of the younger women and girls were employed in the Red Cross hospitals. Some of these had been engaged in war nursing since 1915, under dangerous and in many cases primitive and horrible conditions. Necessity and patriotism, however, rather than choice and preliminary preparation, had thrust this service upon them.

In order to improve the standard of nursing service which these Russian aids rendered, the Red Cross initiated a course of study, to be accompanied by four months' practice in general nursing at the hospitals at Vladivostok and Russian Island. As no nursing textbooks were available, a digest of the A. R. C. Manual of Home Hygiene and Care of the Sick was prepared and translated for the use of the pupils. The ward instructors supplemented this theory with bedside teaching. This course of study, though elementary in nature, has offered a splendid opportunity for genuine constructive social work with these Russian girls. Challenging as it does the absorbing love of study which characterizes the Russian temperament, the Department of Nursing hoped to open up to these young women whose lives had been shadowed by war, the vista of an honored and remunerative vocation.

Helen Bridges, Director of the Bureau of Nursing Education, reports a total enrollment on December first of last year, of thirty-two aids. The graduation of these students was held December eleventh, "in a long, high-ceilinged room, with the cement floor covered with warm-toned grass rugs from Japan, numerous wicker arm chairs with little tables placed near by, flowers, and softly shaded lights." Lieut. Col. Rudolph Teusler, American Red Cross Commissioner to Siberia, presented the certificates of completion of the course to the freshly uniformed happy Russian aids.

Another of the fine achievements of the Commission was the rescue of several hundred homeless children, found in the Ural Mountains, reduced to a state bordering on savagery. These little ones, ranging in age from three to sixteen, lost from their parents, were gathered into a colony at Lake Turgoyak, and later were taken to a Red Cross orphanage on Russian Island.

Another instance of the swiftness with which the Red Cross met

emergency needs was the assignment of nine nurses and several doctors to Harbin, Manchuria, when cholera threatened that city.

Mrs. Alice St. John, Chief Nurse of the Siberian Commission, Anna Tittman, Chief Nurse, Eastern Division; Ethel C. Pinder, Chief Nurse, Central Division, and Grace Harrington, Chief Nurse, Western Division, have comprised the executive personnel of the Department of Nursing. Twenty of the nurses sailed for San Francisco from Vladivostok on January 17, while the remaining number will return as soon as transportation can be secured.

THE LEAGUE OF RED CROSS SOCIETIES

Representatives of the National Red Cross Societies of thirty countries have been invited to attend the sessions of the first General Council of the League, which will meet at Geneva, Switzerland, March second.

The membership of the League is now made up of the Red Cross Societies of Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Czecho-Slovakia, Denmark, England, France, Greece, Holland, India, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Roumania, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, the United States, Uruguay, and Venezuela. The United States is taking a prominent place in developing this organization. At the Cannes Conference, last April, Henry P. Davison was elected as Chairman of the Board of Governors, while nine other Americans have been appointed to important offices, among whom are: Alice Fitzgerald, Chief of the Division of Nursing; Col. Richard P. Strong, formerly of the Harvard Medical School, as General Medical Director; Prof. C. Whipple, of Harvard, as Chief of the Division of Sanitation; Dr. Thomas R. Brown, of Johns Hopkins, as Chief of the Division of Medical Information and Medical Publication; Dr. George G. Shattuck, of Harvard, as General Medical Secretary.

PHOTOGRAPH OF MISS DELANO

Since the February issue of the JOURNAL went to press, further arrangements have been made with Harris and Ewing, photographers, 1311 F. Street, Washington, D. C., for securing copies of the uniform photograph of Miss Delano.

For the large size, which measures fifteen by twenty inches, framed, an unusually low rate, similar to that given the Army, and the Navy, has been made to the Red Cross, of \$15 each. These photographs, however, must be purchased framed.

The smaller size, eight inches by ten, may be secured at the rate of \$3 each, unframed, or \$6.50 each, framed in silver and grey. This estimate has been reduced from the original quotation of \$8 each.

Carriage charges will be prepaid on both sizes. Nurses desiring these photographs are urged to place their orders directly with Harris and Ewing, although the Department of Nursing will be glad to refer letters to them.

APPOINTMENT OF CANADIAN LOCAL COMMITTEE

In order to keep in touch with American Red Cross nurses now in Canada, a Local Committee on Red Cross Nursing Service was appointed, January 22, at Toronto, Ontario. Jean L. Gunn, a graduate of the Presbyterian Hospital, New York, now Superintendent of Nurses of the Toronto General Hospital, has accepted the appointment of chairman of this Committee, while Elizabeth G. Flaws, a graduate of the Toronto General Hospital, and at present Superintendent of the Wellesley Hospital, Toronto, will act as secretary. American Red Cross nurses now residing in Canada are urged to communicate with the officers of this Committee, in order that they may keep alive their interest in the activities of the Red Cross Nursing Service.

THE INFLUENZA SITUATION

Upon the slight recurrence of influenza which seemed to threaten the country during January, the Department of Nursing was given an opportunity to test the preparedness plan for fighting this disease which was sent out to Red Cross Division offices early in the fall.

When the United States Public Health Service pointed out during the summer that the influenza might return again in epidemic form, the Red Cross issued a general plan of mobilization, outlining the policies and organization which should control Red Cross relief activities. Primarily the Red Cross recognized that its action in such an emergency should be responsive and supplementary, to that of the health authorities; that the mobilization of physicians rested wholly within the province of the U. S. Public Health Service and state and local health authorities, as well as the preparation of educational pamphlets, although the Red Cross might well act as a distributing agency for such educational material. Particularly appropriate to the Red Cross, however, would be the provision of nursing service, hospital supplies, social, motor, and canteen service.

Each Red Cross Chapter was authorized to be prepared, through a complete survey of local resources, to mobilize immediately for relief work should the influenza become epidemic. Similar organization, emphasizing close coöperation with the State Boards of Health, was also effected in the Division Offices, while at National Headquarters, a National Director of Red Cross Influenza Emergency Service,

with a committee representing the Nursing Service, the Comptroller's office, and the U. S. Public Health Service, was appointed.

Mobilization of nursing resources was to include the organization of mobile units, with a Red Cross nurse as detachment leader. Home Defense nurses, nurses' aids, practical nurses, and volunteers might be utilized under the direction of graduate nurses. Detailed instructions were also issued regarding the assignment of nurses from one division to another; coöperation with public health nursing agencies, both within and outside of the Red Cross, and with nurses' registries; extra office assistance; reports; salaries; transportation; and maintenance of nurses in active service.

Owing to the effectiveness of this plan, little pressure has come to National Headquarters, the Divisions relying entirely upon local resources. The influenza itself has not seemed to be nearly so virulent, nor widespread as last year, and there has even been some question as to whether the so-called "flu" is not in reality old-fashioned *grippe*. From all sides, however, one hears discussions on the "scarcity of nurses." Such a situation seems hardly comprehensible. There are at present only 2,350 nurses in the Army Nurse Corps. Over 20,000 have been demobilized from active service. This number has also been augmented by a graduating class of approximately 14,000.

A logical conclusion follows that the question is one of adjustment rather than of actual shortage of nurses. Perhaps such a situation may also be explained by cases which have been cited to the Red Cross,—of chronic invalids employing two graduate nurses, of hospitals filled with operative cases which might have been postponed for the present emergency, of convalescents refusing to release their special nurses. After their past two years of humanitarian service, involving as it did, sacrifices of remuneration as well as of comfort and previous associations, it is easy to appreciate that nurses should strongly desire to elect types of service where the compensation will help them regain their financial equilibrium. The Red Cross hopes, however, that they will find it possible to respond again for the epidemic, should the need arise, according to the precedent and traditions which they themselves have established in the public mind.